

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

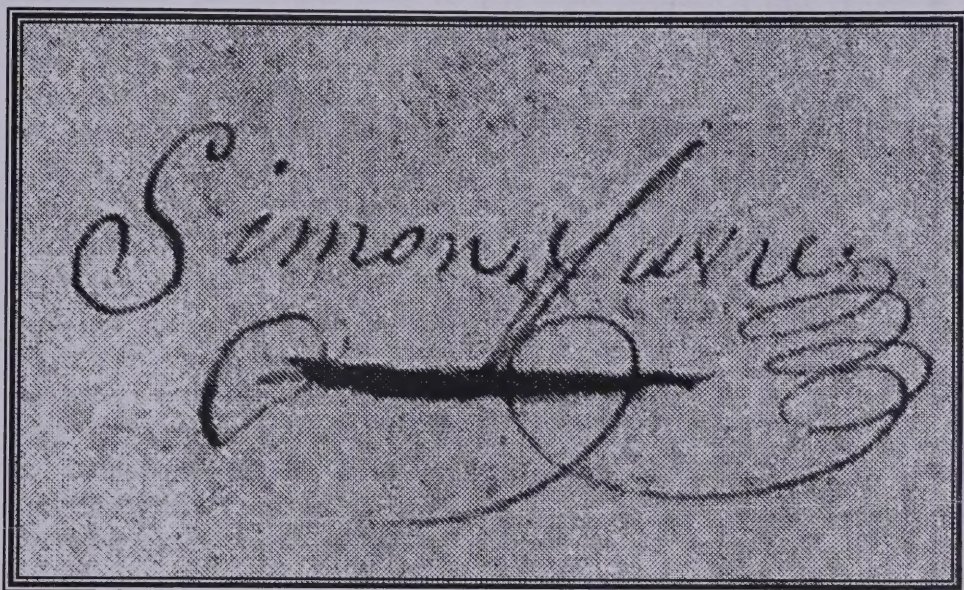
June 2010

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The June luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, June 17, 2010, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker will be Tim Kellar, Chancery Clerk of Hancock County. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call **by noon on Wednesday, June 16**, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-five people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

Even though October is still several months away, it's not too early to begin thinking about and planning the Hancock County Historical Society Annual Cemetery Tour. It will be held on Halloween night, Sunday, **October 31, 2010**, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street. We will need volunteers to help prepare the cemetery for the tour (mark the path, etc.), to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House. **(PLEASE NOTE THAT LAST MONTH'S HISTORIAN GAVE AN INCORRECT DATE.)**



The signature of Simon Favre as it appears on the document for the exchange of slaves from him to Rebecca Austin dated May 24, 1801

Lawrence County Archives—Simon Favre

By
Russell Guerin

Tales, legends, and anecdotes of significant historical figures abound in American history, and accounts of Simon Favre, the celebrated interpreter to the Choctaws for the French, British, Spanish, and the Americans, are also abundant. Because information about early Hancock County history has been hard to come by, primarily as a result of the burning of the courthouse at Gainesville in 1853, we glean informa-

tion from many sources and are pleased to find written, documented history.

After several years of arduous research into the history of Hancock County's most interesting pioneer by my confederate, Dr. Marco Giardino, a bit of luck dropped a cache of papers into my lap. They came from a completely unsuspected source—Lawrence County, MS. It is evident that they are copies borrowed from New Orleans and Hancock County, sometimes running together even though written years apart. The mystery is why were they housed there?

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor
Pat Fuchs, PublisherPublished monthly by the
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Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)

MISSION STATEMENT

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

I had learned of these papers during a casual conversation with Jerry Heitzman, the prime researcher of Favre genealogy to date. However, before I ventured to Monticello, the county seat of Lawrence County, I called to ascertain that there was such a file. A most helpful lady checked and assured me that it was so, and after a little conversation, she generously offered to mail me copies. The papers are welcome additions to the total picture of Simon Favre, but they also introduce questions with no evident answers.

About the same time, Dr. Giardino and I became aware of *The Louisiana Slave Database, 1719—1820*, by Dr. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall. Her in-depth study makes it possible to explain and understand some of the revelations of the Lawrence County papers.

The Louisiana records of sales of slaves by Simon Favre during later life and of those sold by his estate, apparently in slave auctions, prove invaluable as there was no previous record of such sales.

The major addition to the knowledge of Simon Favre comes in the inclusion of an unknown plantation, the name of which is illegible but appears to be "Storpem," and a list of fifty-seven slaves not mentioned in his will. It may be that he had just bought the plantation and slaves shortly before he died as it is not likely that he would have ignored values like these in making his will.

The Will

Certainly among the most important documents in the Lawrence County collection is the will

RELATED DOCUMENTS

The more important Lawrence County documents include the following:

1. English translations of the will, dated May 18, 1812.
2. A second translation of the will with cover memo by Judge James Pitot, dated at New Orleans July 20, 1813.
3. The French will
4. A marriage certificate, signed by Father Antonio Sedella in New Orleans
5. A copy of records from Hancock County, certified by Roderick Seal, dated December 30, 1844, including an inventory of personal property.
6. An appraisers' report dated June 15, 1814, referred to as "Second Inventory," which included lands.

INDEX OF DATES RELATED TO THE DOCUMENTS

Feb. 5, 1800—Simon Favre's son by Rebecca Austin is born.
 Mar. 24, 1801—slave exchange between Simon and Rebecca
 Mar. 25, 1801—marriage of Simon Favre and Celeste Rochon
 Aug. 2, 1802—first child born to Simon and Celeste
 April 1812—likely purchase of plantation
 May 18, 1812—Simon's will
 July 3, 1813—death of Simon Favre
 June 15, 1814—inventory of personal property
 Oct. 5, 1814—second inventory
 c. 1820—marriage of the Widow Favre to Isaac Graves
 Nov. 1827—final decree of the estate

of Simon Favre in the form of copies of the original French and two English translations. While a copy of the will was known before, these documents appear in some ways to be more precise.

The lands listed in the will total 5600 arpents. [An arpent is an old French unit of land area equal to about 0.85 of an acre.] Included were lands given to him by the Indians on the river Tombecbee (Tombigbee). Among these were a total of 2400 arpents from his father, who had obtained 1600 through an English grant, 1200 from the English government, 800 from the Spanish government, and 1200 more that he had apparently bought himself.

Noteworthy about the will is the absence of a list and valuation of the decedent's slaves. Inclusion is customary for wills of the period for reasons that their value normally exceeds other assets. For this reason, they often are listed first, before cattle, land, and other valuables.

After his death, an appraisal for his estate listed fifty-seven slaves valued at \$14,695, a very substantial asset not to have been mentioned in the will. The question arises: Why were the slaves not included in the will?

Inventory and Appraisal of Assets

It seems clear that Favre died in Hancock County, but documents essential to the distribution of his estate had been filed in New Orleans, as well as in his home state, probably with his attorney, Rutilius Pray of Pearlinton, MS.

New information revealed

in the Lawrence County papers is to be found primarily in the documents dated June 15 and October 5, 1814, the two inventories of personal property. The first is the summary of the appraisal of the inventory, and for the first time, there is an inclusion of slaves as having been owned by Simon Favre. It is signed by Joseph Chalon, Mathurin Babin, John Williams, and Noel Jourdan, all important figures in Hancock County.

Called the "Inventory of Personal Property," it begins with a list by name and age of the fifty-seven slaves. Next came the cattle, the horses, saddles, a thirty-ton schooner, etc., for a grand total of the personal estate of \$20,326.

Mention is made that the real estate had been eliminated from the appraisal "because the greater part of it...is at a great distance from this place" and that the appraisers have no knowledge of the worth of the parcels. Possibly these parcels could refer to the lands in and near Mobile. In addition the sale of the property could not be made without an order from the legislature.

The 9th Parcel—a Plantation New to Favre History

The next document of importance is the "Second Inventory," dated October 5, 1814. It was completed at the Pearlinton plantation of Celeste Rochon, widow of Simon Favre, and appointed the same appraisers as above, adding one, Louis Geuses [Gause?]. Various assets were listed, beginning with "2 pair of Broken Oxen" at \$60 and continu-

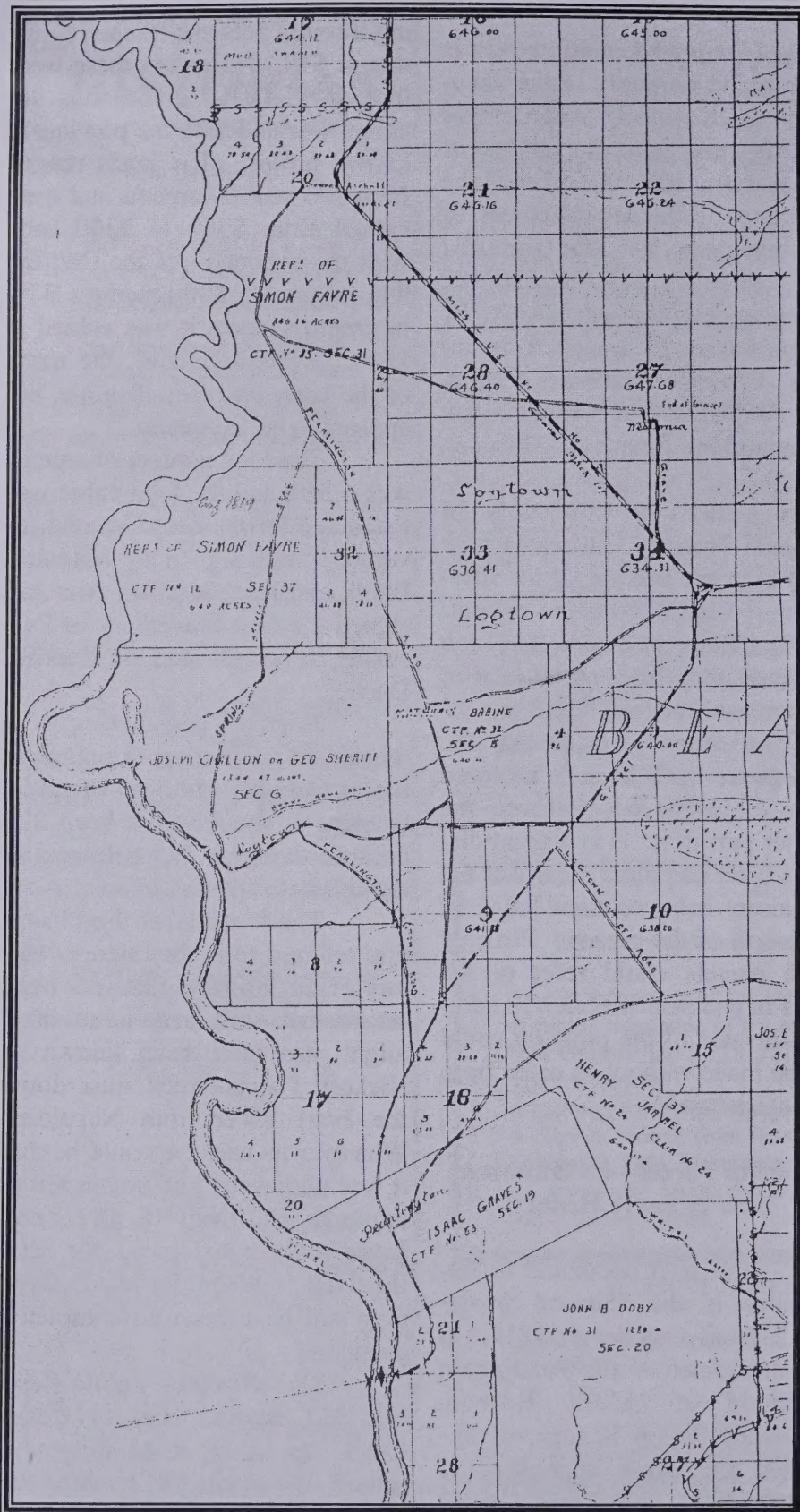
ing through pots and kitchen furniture at \$10. Following these were then listed lands, to which a 9th parcel was added to the previously known pieces. The lands ranged from 800 to 1200 arpents and were valued from \$200 to \$300 each with the exception of the last, the 9th, measuring 800 arpents. With its improvements it was valued at \$500. As stated above, the name of the latter parcel is illegible, but appears to be "Storepem."

The total number of arpents was 6,200, and the total value was listed at \$2,410. This "Second Inventory" was signed by Mathurin Babin and Noel Jourdan, who had signed the first "Inventory of Personal Property," and J. Baptiste Daube.

Jourdan acknowledged a mistake in the first appraisal in that it included 450 head of cattle, whereas it should have been 225 because the other 225 belonged to the children.

The location of the plantation referred to in the estate inventory as the 9th parcel has not been established with certainty, but it might also have been known as Hickory Camp Creek, just down the Pearl River from Napoleon. Whatever its name, it could be that it was purchased just before Favre wrote his will (May 18, 1812) and conceivably transfer had not been finalized. When he died, there may still have been no completed deed.

United States Public Land No. 322 shows "Hickory Camp Creek" as having been originally settled in April 1812 with the original and present claimant (as of November 1819) said to be John Bte. Favre. The date of settlement was within one month of Favre's



This map with the Pearl River on the left shows two tracts of land owned by Simon Favre. The upper parcel, located downriver from Napoleon, is probably the one referred to in the "Second Inventory" as the "9th Parcel."

writing of his will. Simon's oldest son, named Jean Baptiste, would have been only age ten at the time, so it may have been Simon's brother, Baptiste Favre, who took possession perhaps as a family representative. It is possible that this in some way ties in with the October 24 sale.

Later, in the 1829 Tax Rolls of Hancock County, Jean Baptiste Favre is still carried as owner in referring to a parcel of 640 acres as "Hickory Camp." This is possibly the 640 acre tract shown in later maps as being owned by "representatives" of Simon Favre. It is located just south (down river) from Napoleon. [Note the map on p. 4.]

Following a signature of Noel Jourdan on a document dated July 5, 1814, there is another document with an uncertain date. Mentioning only "the 5th of the present month," it is a petition by the much honored Rutilius Pray, attorney for the widow Favre, asking the court of Hancock County to allow the sale of some assets to include a schooner, several slaves, 160 cows, and 30 mares and young horses. The petition continued, suggesting that the judge "will please to order the advertisement of the above mentioned articles...." It is interesting to note that Celeste did not sell all that she had asked to sell. In point of fact, the slave Ben (age 50) was sold for \$405 separately from his family.

Order to Pay Legacy—1824

From this point, the documents skip from 1814 to ten years later. Following the October 1814 document, papers are run together continuously as though part of one document. The next is an "Order to pay legacy," dated

August 14, 1824. It is at this point that it becomes apparent that the above actions were being reviewed for a civil action with copied documents involving a younger Simon Favre, son of Rebecca Austin, with whom Favre had a relationship before his marriage to Celeste Rochon.

The later document is a restatement of that part of Favre's will which left to his son \$1500 "to be paid out of the proceeds of the estate...at such time as he shall arrive at the age of majority" and that "he has arrived at the age aforementioned." On the date above the younger Simon had come of age and swore that he had not received any part of the amount promised.

At a time unknown, the widow Favre had married Isaac Graves. Subsequently, at the February 1825 session of the court, on a motion by Rutilius Pray for Isaac Graves and his wife Celeste Favre, the above decree was set aside. The reason, in part, was that the estate's costs had not been settled according to Isaac and Celeste Graves. In addition there was a complication introduced in that young Simon had assigned his benefits to one Jesse Depew, a circumstance which had not been disclosed to Celeste. She and Graves, therefore, filed suit against Depew. At this point, they also filed for a partition of real estate consisting of a parcel at the lower end of Pearlington, measuring forty by forty arpents, "agreeable to a plan made by Elihu Carver. This, together with the next petition, may have been a maneuver to separate lands that might have been attached to

Simon Austin or his assigns.

On July 12, 1826, Graves made a "petition for dower." This was a request that the "tract of land at Pearlington" be considered separate from the lands belonging to the other heirs. On May 2, 1826, Isaac and Celeste signed a statement reading, "The accounts of the testamentary executors of Simon Favre will be reported to the next term of the County and Probate Court of the County of Hancock."

Credits and Debits—1826

It was then that a final statement of the executors of the estate of Simon Favre was presented by Rutilius Pray. Submitted to the court for its October 1826 term, it was headed "Exposition" and divided into parts A, B, and C.

Part A was a valuation of what was perceived to be the worth or assets including slaves, cattle, horses, a schooner, and lands. The total comes to \$20,575.

Next came what appears to have been July 25, 1814, "sales" of some of the same items, but also an October 24 sale for \$1000 of "Plantation Storepem." [Editor's note: the name is still uncertain.] There is nothing to indicate who the buyer was.

The total sales including cattle, horses, slaves, and the plantation came to \$26,956, the largest being that of slaves, amounting to \$21,870.

Part B of the Exposition lists substantial debts. This also is at variance with the will, which appears to treat debts lightly. In contrast, the Exposition is more explicit, listing nine for a total of \$32,885.991/4. The largest was \$15,932, perhaps final payment for

slaves.

One item that stands out in the above figures is that the Mississippi estimate, made by landed neighbors and ranking officials, was far lower than the actual sale value. This is even more remarkable when considering that the estimate was for fifty-six slaves, whereas the sale was far fewer. It is evident that the market in New Orleans was stronger than that of Hancock County and that an auction commanded higher prices than individual sales. The executors were wise to take to market in New Orleans what the widow Favre called "articles."

Part C again recites the receipts from sales, adding \$1,500 for four hundred arpents in Mobile and lesser amounts for two small sites, and then claims disbursements of the \$32,885.991/4.

Estate Solvent

On balance, the estate appears to have been solvent. The total amount of the debt is shown to have been disbursed in an 1826 filing with the court. This is still confusing because the Exposition does not show receipts and payout in balance. The court stated that the commissioners had accounted for land totaling 2,840 acres and considered that this was to be available for payment of shortfall. In fact, Pray seems to have made a formal petition to that effect.

Pray charged a fee of eight percent on the inventory, equal to \$1,646, inventory being equal to appraisement of \$20,575.

Final Decree—1827

In the November court

term of 1827, another decree was made. In stating "the prayer of the petitioner is granted," it also recited "sale has been made of all the remaining lands belonging to the said estate." An accounting shows that four parcels were sold as follows: a tract of 600 arpents on the West Pearl in Louisiana bought by Benjamin Singelary for \$600; a tract of 640 acres on the east bank of the Pearl at a place called the "Waist House"; a tract of 958 acres on the East Pearl, called Favre's Old Place; a tract of 640 acres on the Pearl River at Walkaya Bluff. The last three tracts were bought by Isaac Graves for a total of \$1,740. Noel Jourdan was acting as auctioneer.

A Concluding Observation: Favre and New Orleans

In the listing of related documents on page 2 of this article, there is mention of a memo written by James Pitot, judge in New Orleans. It is treated here separately from other information because, unlike factual data, it invites some speculation. In particular, it suggests Favre's relationship to New Orleans may have been more than as a resident of a neighboring state. It appears that—acting as representatives of Simon Favre—Pierre Caraby and Don Martin Pellerin, "both residents of the Parish of New Orleans," presented a will to Judge Pitot. A paper with the will read, "I declare that this packet containing my testament and last will that I deposit into the hands of [illegible] Narcisse Broutin, my friend, recommending to him to render it public as soon as decease takes place. New Orleans, May

18, 1812. Simon Favre."

There is no doubt that Favre was a resident of Mississippi for many years, spending a career as a translator to the Choctaws and that he made his home in Hancock County probably at least from the time of his marriage to Celeste. However, so much of his life and so many of his important events having been tied to New Orleans, one must wonder whether he wanted to be considered a New Orleans resident.

In addition, several other items are worth consideration:

—His illegitimate son, Simon—said to have been born of Rosalia Ostein (Rebecca Austin) on February 5, 1800—was baptized in New Orleans at St. Louis Cathedral on February 18, 1800. While Father Antonio Sedella (better known as Pere Antoine) listed her as a native of Mobile, he wrote that Favre was "a native of this city."

—In the Cathedral record of Favre's marriage to Celeste dated March 25, 1801, and officiated by Sedella, Favre was said to be a resident of Mobile.

—Favre also named Fergus and Armand Duplantier, two prominent Louisianans, in his will as curator for his children and as executor of the estate. (Later, Celeste and Isaac Graves were successful in having them removed from any official capacity because they were residents of Louisiana and therefore said to be unable to serve in Mississippi.)

—He dealt in the New Orleans slave market, including sales to the notary, Narcisse Broutin, his "friend," to whom the above described packet was entrusted.

—His obituary was published

by a New Orleans French/English newspaper on July 20, 1813, shortly after his death on July 3, although it lists Mobile under "notes."

While it must be considered that Hancock County was not as much a center for business and legal activity as New Orleans, there may have been other reasons for Favre's preferences such as the politics of the time. If nothing more, Favre's associations with the prominent officials and property owners of Louisiana point to his status as someone accepted as a person of high rank.

For more information on this topic and other Hancock County history, visit Russell Guerin's blog "A Creole in Mississippi" at www.russguerin.com.

Lunch at the Toulme-Phillips House

Last month's luncheon at the home of Society member Dot Phillips was a splendid success. She graciously opened her home to the Historical Society for its monthly meeting.

The first thing which caught the attention of guests as they arrived was the panoramic view of the Bay of St. Louis from the front porch of the home. As they entered the central entrance hall, they were greeted by Dot and Phillips family members who invited guests to wander through the house on impromptu tours or offered to give more guided tours themselves.

The front section of the house is composed of the central hallway with two rooms on each side. The two on the left are bedrooms, and of the two on the right, the front one is the formal dining

room, and the second one is the kitchen.

The back of the hallway opens into a comfortable living room with large windows at the back. A spacious, L-shaped room with numerous windows at the back of the house offers additional sleeping and common areas.

Restored antiques, which have been passed down through many generations and were damaged by Hurricane Katrina, furnish the home.

The Historical Society wishes to thank Dot Phillips and her family for inviting us into her home.

Lunch was served buffet style and catered by Michelle Nichols of Dinner-n-Things. As always, it was delicious!

R—the restored home of Dot Phillips



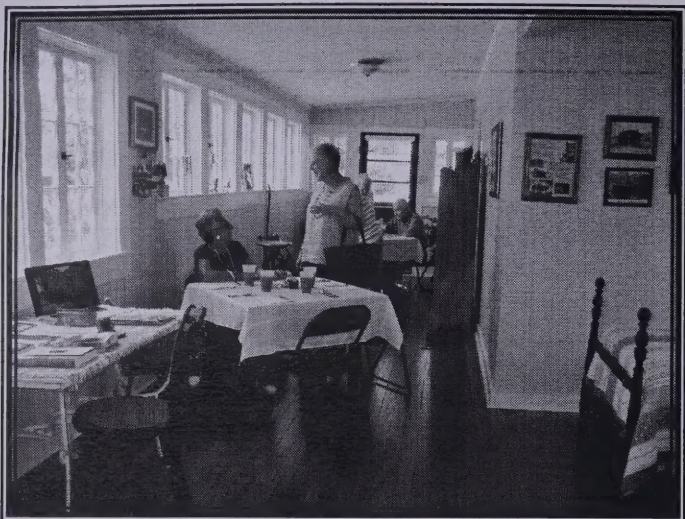
Dot Phillips, in white slacks, welcoming guests to her home

Luncheon guests relaxing in the living room

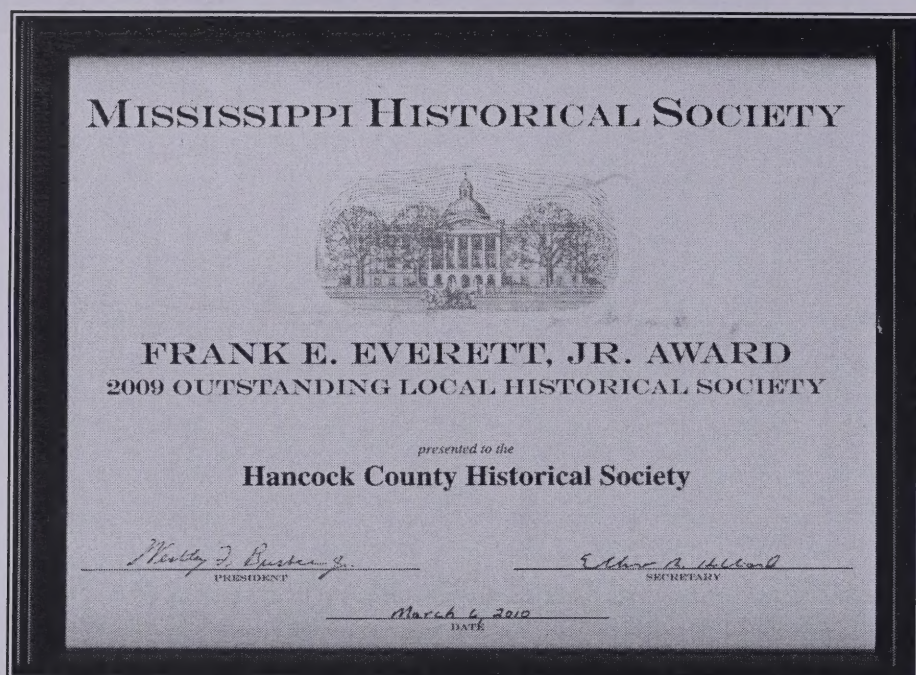


L.—Caterer Michelle Nichols serving lunch to Society member, Ames Kergosien
R.—Executive Director Charles Gray and guests enjoying lunch on the front porch





Betty Krieger,
2nd Vice President, and Carol
Wasielewski,
Secretary, chat-
ting before lunch
is served.



This photograph shows the Frank E. Everett, Jr., Award given to the Hancock County Historical Society as the 2009 Outstanding Local Historical Society for its outstanding contribution to the preservation and interpretation of Mississippi history.



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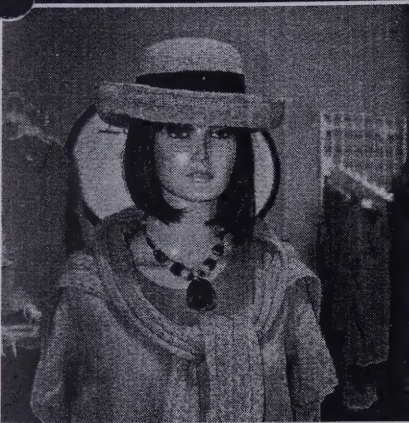
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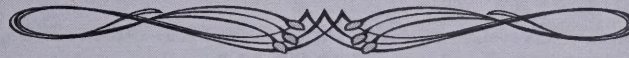
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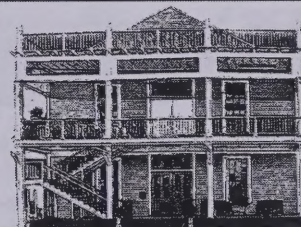
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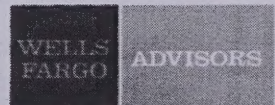


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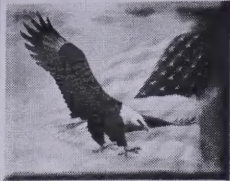
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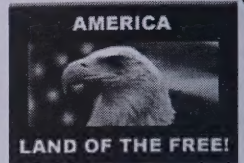
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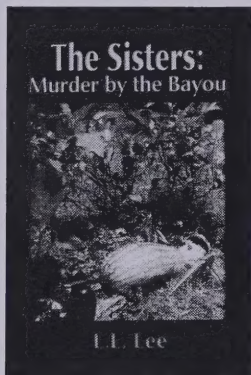
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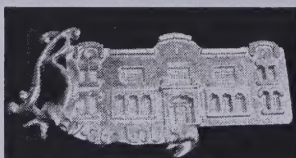
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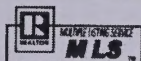
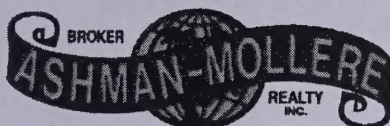


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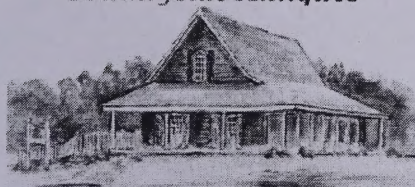
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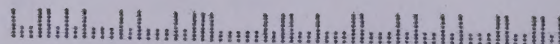
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